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A Newsletter for readers of The Great Musicians

From the Editor

Although the proportion of Women's entries in the biographies section of *Who's Who in Music* is only 11·7% of the total entries, women seem to be as prominent in the musical profession as in any other – with the possible exception of teaching. And why not? Singers there have been since time immemorial; and the accomplishments of piano strumming and the acquisition of a pretty voice were for a long time considered essential parts of a genteel young lady's upbringing. However with this century's change in social structure and the 'emancipation' of the female sex, women gradually entered every aspect of the profession, albeit fighting – as in all other walks of life – for acceptance and equal opportunity.

But, as Margaret Paterson, Chairman of The Society of Women Musicians, writes in this week's *Baton* article, although instrumentalists, professors and singers abound, female conductors and composers are still not very numerous. However, with the appearance (and acclamation) of works by Lutyens, Lockwood, Maconchy, Tate, –to name but a few–and the example of Boulanger and Holst, perhaps the tide will turn; still, these do seem to be aspects of the musical profession which women have so far fought shy of.

This week brings us to the half-way mark in our Beethoven series, edited by Dr Robert Simpson, with a recording of the last movement of the 'Eroica' Symphony, and the *Coriolan* and *Egmont* overtures. Previous issues in this series have contained records of the 'Pastoral' Symphony (*The Great Musicians* No. 1), the First Symphony (No. 6), the 'Moonlight' and 'Pathétique' Piano sonatas (No. 7), the 'Waldstein' Sonata (No. 27) and the first three movements of the 'Eroica' Symphony (last week). Readers who have missed out on any of these issues can obtain them from newsagents or direct from us.

Jennifer Vyvyan, soprano

Oriel Sutherland, contralto

Janet Craxton, oboist

Phyllis Sellick, pianist

Four artists featured at some of the Society of Women Musicians' concerts

Neville Gambier

Neville Gambier

Over.

The Society of Women Musicians

by Margaret Paterson

Margaret Paterson was born at Greenock on the Clyde. Educated at Cheltenham Ladies' College, Somerville College, Oxford and the Royal College of Music, she has had varied experience as a musician. Before the war she lectured, freelanced as a critic and organised and conducted a small symphony orchestra which bore her name. During the war she did appeal work and then, for a short time, was on the staff of the Women's Employment Federation. Married to a fellow-Scot who is a chartered accountant in the City, she has a daughter and a son. Family life leaves her little time for regular musical work, though she still does some teaching and composition. She takes a very active interest in The Society of Women Musicians, of which she is Chairman.

Why a society of *women* musicians? Well, why not?

There are many clubs and societies exclusively for men. There are a few which offer women limited facilities and there are some in which the sexes have equal rights; but ours is a society organised by women mainly for women. For all that, we do welcome men as Associates and Fellows, and, apart from having no voting powers, they enjoy the same privileges as the women members.

This is a society for people who are deeply interested in music. Most of the members are professional musicians. Some, such as Imogen Holst, Irene Kohler, Norma Procter, Phyllis Sellick, Jennifer Vyvyan and Helen Watts, are renowned wherever western music is known: others have more modest claims to fame. Many members are teachers, some with a great reputation; others, perhaps familiar only to a small circle, are often responsible for sowing the seeds of a lifetime's devotion to music in the hearts of their pupils. Keen amateurs form an important section of the Society, providing, as they do, a discerning audience at our various concerts.

What are our aims and objects?

When the Society was formed in 1911, few women, apart from singers, had established themselves as performers. There was much for the professional woman musician to fight for–acceptance as the equal of men in the practice of the art, a recognised place in the orchestral world, a regular platform where she might prove her talent as executant or composer.

But surely all these aims are now achieved?

On the whole, they are, although prejudices still seem to linger against women as conductors and composers.

What can this Society do to encourage those women who venture into these two important fields of music?

The art of conducting demands such rare qualities of heart and mind and body that only an exceptional man can master it. If only for physical reasons how much harder it is for women to do so! Few have adopted it as a career: fewer still have gained recognition as conductors, and we are therefore particularly proud to have some of these as members of our Society, among them Ruth Gipps, Joan Kemp-Potter and Kathleen Riddick. One of our Honorary Vice-presidents is Madame Nadia Boulanger, that remarkable musician, who has for long enjoyed the whole-hearted respect and admiration of the most critical of choirs and orchestras and audiences all over the world.

But alas! as a Society there is not a great deal we can do for the aspiring woman conductor! Indirectly, of course, it is always possible to support her efforts.

The first three Presidents of the Society were composers . . . Liza Lehmann (1911-12), Emily Daymond (1912-13) and Cécile Chaminade (1913-14), as also is Elizabeth Poston, who was President from 1955 till 1961. Yet women seldom seem to attempt serious composition. Is it perhaps because their creative urge is satisfied in different ways from those of men . . . by the bearing and rearing of children, the making of a home, cooking, sewing and other domestic arts and crafts? However that may be, composers of both sexes are assured of our active interest.

Periodically, we offer prizes for new works and, even more important, we provide a chance to present them to the public.

Compositions for soloists or small ensembles are submitted to our board of adjudicators. If they are sufficiently impressed with the work, it may then be performed either at an Ivimey Concert (of which more later) or at one of our regular public concerts. Recently we have had first

performances of music by Mary Chandler, Ruth Gipps, Elizabeth Maconchy, Lois Phillips and Beryl Price, all of whom belong to the Society. We have introduced one of Wilfred Josephs' compositions to a London audience and a short time ago one of our Fellows, Gordon Jacob, wrote a charming sonata for oboe and piano. It is dedicated to two of our members, Evelyn Rothwell (Lady Barbirolli) and Iris Loveridge, who first played it at one of our concerts.

Sometimes, instead of a programme of music, we have a talk by an eminent musician, often one of the distinguished Fellows of the Society, such as Sir Arthur Bliss, Sir Adrian Boult or Lennox Berkeley. Usually these are followed by open discussions which are unfailingly lively and thought-provoking.

One of our main functions is to do all we can to further the cause of young performers, and in this as in other activities our President, Marion, Countess of Harewood, gives us a splendid lead.

A considerable number of promising students complete their training with every prospect of doing well in a profession which is now more highly competitive than ever before. Some find highly satisfactory work in one of the many orchestras which afford regular employment; singers may be taken into the chorus at one of the opera-houses; but for those in either category whose ambition it is to be a soloist there is nearly always a very difficult period between the end of their formal training and their appearance as accepted artists of some standing. We can do much to assist them to bridge this gap.

We hold five or six auditions annually. At these a panel of authoritative musicians of wide experience discusses each case on its merits, taking every opportunity to pass on to the candidates any advice which is thought to be helpful. If approved by the panel, the young performer is invited to appear at an Ivimey Concert.

The Ivimey Concerts were instituted in memory of Ella Ivimey, the accompanist and music editor. They take place five times a year in private studios or large drawing-rooms, the audience consisting of members of the Society and their friends. The performers are not paid, but are given a small contribution towards their expenses.

If they reach a really high standard of performance at an Ivimey Concert, they may then be offered the opportunity to share a programme with a well-known soloist or ensemble at one of our public recitals, of which there are eight each year. This scheme has many advantages. A platform appearance can be bought, it is true, at a price; but who could guarantee any unknown musician an audience? At the Society's concerts, on the other hand, the fact that a famous personality is taking part in the programme assures the newcomer of an audience – and a discriminating one at that!

Each term on a Saturday we organise a Master Class. These classes offer a chance for advanced students and young professionals to have a lesson from one or other of the greatest teachers of the day, and at a fraction of the fee which would normally be charged for such tuition. Students – whether taking an active part as pupils or coming simply to sit with the audience – benefit enormously from these classes, which invariably prove vitally stimulating and instructive, taken by such inspired Masters as Leon Goossens, Peter Pears, Max Rostal, Paul Tortelier, Joan Cross or Fanny Waterman, the last two being among our Honorary Vice-presidents.

From time to time we are fortunate in being able to offer our members seats at much reduced prices for opera; while one of our most popular features is the annual Christmas party, when we enjoy some brilliant light entertainment before joining together to sing carols.

Most of our events are held in the Great Drawing-Room at 4 St James's Square, until recently the headquarters of the Arts Council of Great Britain. The Great Drawing-Room is perfect for our purpose. A very beautiful room, with wonderful acoustics, it provides exactly the right atmosphere for our meetings. Immediately adjacent to it is another fine reception room, where, after the formal programme is over, it is our custom to gather for light refreshment and conversation. This last is a most important facet of our life as a Society, bringing together, as it does, audience and performer, amateur and professional, novice and veteran, composer and critic, British and foreign, all bound by their common love for a fascinating art, the universal language of music.

Note: Members of the public are always welcome at the Society's concerts, which are advertised in the press. Full particulars of The Society of Women Musicians may be had upon application to the Secretary, Miss Grace Barrons Richardson, 45 Wolseley Road, London N.8.

READERS' LETTERS

Lighting the candle

I am a seventeen-year-old youth who is writing to thank you for the service you are providing. I never really appreciated classical music until I first bought *The Great Musicians;* then I saw the light – the true beauty of classical music. I still like and probably prefer 'pop' music but by appreciating classical music and understanding it one can see that 'pop' music–well, certain types anyway–stems from and is inspired by great writers such as Mozart and Tchaikovsky. Thank you for lighting the candle.

Mr John McDonnell, Edgware, Middlesex

We are very pleased that you are enjoying The Great Musicians *and that the series is helping you towards an appreciation of classical music. If we can demonstrate through* The Great Musicians *that classical music has a right to be considered as relevant as contemporary 'pop' music, we think we can claim to have succeeded in some measure.*

Scotch?

Mendelssohn's Third Symphony is not 'Scottish' as printed in *Baton* 14, but 'Scotch', as reference to any musical dictionary will show. Mendelssohn often misspelt foreign words with which he was unfamiliar.

Mr Colin A. Roth, London, SW15

The spelling of this adjective – either 'Scotch' or 'Scottish' – has often in the past been a subject of hot debate. But we understand that nowadays the adjective – unless applied to such things as food or whisky – is generally spelled 'Scottish'. This, incidentally, is the spelling used in Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians.

Musica cum laude!

My congratulations on the consistently first-rate quality of your series. I was especially pleased to hear the BBC sing your praises when they reviewed the first three of the series in 'Music Magazine' (21st June) – surely one of the most searching review programmes. But I was sorry to read that you have been criticised for breaking up symphonies into more than one record. As far as the 'Fantastic' Symphony is concerned, it was pleasing to hear the third movement in its entirety without changing over sides half way through – one or two recordings have chosen to split this movement in two, or else to adjust the tempo of the whole symphony so as to permit this movement's inclusion, uncut, on either side one or two!

Mr Graham D. Campbell, Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex

Thank you!